

SOLUTION — Tactical Vignette 99-1

“FORGING STEEL — Exploiting a Brigade’s Success” from the January-February 1999 issue of ARMOR

(**Note:** There was a mistake in this tactical vignette when it ran in the Jan-Feb 99 issue. The second paragraph, second sentence should have read, “OBJ ANVIL is located three kilometers to the east of PL Red,” instead of west.)

Author's Solution

SITUATION.

Enemy. The enemy defense along OBJ ANVIL has collapsed. It appears that remnants of the enemy mechanized infantry battalion are falling back and trying to secure the bridge over the Quasimodo River while another battalion is approaching from the west to reestablish a defense. Scout #3 reports two T-80s and five BMPs moving northeastward in the vicinity grid 028152. Scout #1 reported two T-80s vicinity grid 040205 moving southwest out of the town of Dirkheim, followed by small dust clouds. We have lost contact with Scout #1. An enemy battalion consisting of six T-80s and 15 BMPs is moving west toward OBJ STEEL, estimated arrival time is 40 minutes. I believe the enemy company in the south is attempting to secure the bridge on OBJ STEEL. The enemy battalion in the west will likely attempt to secure the bridge and reestablish a coherent defense along the river. The unidentified force from Dirkheim will most likely defend the gap between Scout #1 and Scout #2 or move to secure the bridge.

Friendly. The brigade is reorganizing along PL RED. The brigade commander intends to continue the attack by securing OBJ STEEL for future operations.

MISSION. TF 1-40 attacks to secure the bridge on OBJ STEEL to allow the brigade to continue the attack.

EXECUTION.

Intent. Our purpose is to secure the bridge over the Quasimodo River. This provides the brigade a significant tactical advantage for future operations. We must delay the attacking enemy battalion in order to gain time to secure the bridgehead. We must defeat the retreating enemy company in the south. Then, we must secure the far side of the bridge to provide sufficient maneuver space for

follow-on forces to cross the bridge to continue the attack. The endstate is the bridge and OBJ STEEL secured with two companies securing the far side and one company in depth securing the near side and the task force prepared to repel the enemy battalion’s attack.

Concept of Operations. We will cross PL RED in a vee formation with TM C in the north, TM B in the south, and TM A followed by the Engineer Company in the rear. CAS will delay the attacking enemy battalion and artillery will focus on the enemy company in the south. TM C will seize the near side of OBJ STEEL and the bridge while protecting the task force northern flank. TM B will destroy the southern enemy company and then support-by-fire to assist in securing the near side of OBJ STEEL. TM A will cross the bridge after it is secured by TM C, then defend the far side against the attacking enemy battalion. On order, TM B will cross the bridge to assist defending the far side of the bridge in the south.

Concept of Fires. We have priority of artillery fires and two sorties of A-10s loaded with Mavericks on station in 15 minutes. Priority of artillery fires is to Scout #3 to delay the enemy company in the south. On order, artillery priority of fires shift to TM B. Once TM B has destroyed the enemy company, priority of artillery fires is to TM A to assist in delaying enemy battalion and defending the bridgehead. Mortar priority of fires is to TM C, on order TM A. CAS will engage the enemy battalion to provide us the time needed to secure the far side of OBJ STEEL.

Tasks to Subordinate Units.

TM C (initial main effort). Seize the near side of OBJ STEEL and secure the bridge to protect the forward passage of TM A. Support-by-fire vicinity grid 061194, orient east, to protect the crossing and deployment of TM A. Clear the bridge to support the crossing of TM A. Block the mobility corridor vicinity grid 045192 to protect the northeastern flank of the task force. Primary observer for fires against the enemy battalion until TM A is deployed.

TM B. Destroy the enemy company in the south to protect TM Cs southern

flank. Then support-by-fire vicinity center-of-mass grid 042172, orient northeast, to assist securing the near side of OBJ STEEL. On order, follow TM A and defend the southern half of OBJ STEEL, south of the 18-grid line, to assist in protecting the bridgehead.

TM A (on-order main effort). On order, seize and defend the far side of OBJ STEEL to allow the brigade to continue the attack. Be prepared to defend the entire far side of the bridgehead if TM B is unable to cross the bridge in time. Be prepared to reinforce TM Cs blocking of the mobility corridor in the vicinity of grid 061194.

B Company Engineers. Follow TM A, secure the bridge after TM A has crossed. Coordinate emplacement of VOLCANO minefields in support of TM A, execution is on-order.

Mortars. Follow TM C. Occupy position vicinity grid 035186. Initial priority of fires is TM C in order to suppress and obscure enemy forces approaching from the north or at the bridge. As the main effort shifts from TM C to TM A, priority of mortar fires shifts to TM A in order to suppress and obscure enemy forces on the far side of the bridge.

Scout. Attempt to reestablish contact with Scout #1 now. Reposition Scout #2 to the north to observe the unidentified enemy force reported by Scout 1.

SERVICE SUPPORT. Task force trains remain in AA PITTSBURG. Re-supply IAW with SOP.

COMMAND AND SIGNAL. I will move with TM C, then with TM A. TF S3 moves TM B. Task force TOC remains in AA PITTSBURG. Signal is no change.

We move in 15 minutes. Acknowledge over.

RATIONALE.

Success of the task force mission rests on securing the bridge to support the brigade’s future operations. Securing the bridge means the task force must secure

Continued on next page

Solution (Continued from previous page)

the far side of OBJ STEEL to provide the required maneuver space for follow-on brigade forces to move out of the bridgehead. The task force must send maneuver forces to seize the far side. Further maneuver forces on the far side of the bridge must be strong enough to defend against the attacking enemy battalion.

There are three threats the task force must overcome to secure the bridge. The first is the retreating enemy company in the south. The enemy company poses a serious threat to the mission if it gets to the bridge before the task force. At only four kilometers away from the bridge, the enemy company will arrive at the bridge before the task force. We used artillery, adjusted by Scout #3, to delay this enemy company until it can be engaged. This enemy company must be destroyed to prevent it from interfering with the continuing attack. We tasked TM B to destroy this enemy company. With two tank platoons and one mechanized infantry platoon, TM B has the combat power to quickly destroy the enemy company and then be available for other tasks like assisting TM A with defending the far side of the bridge.

The second threat is the enemy battalion approaching from the west. The enemy battalion is expected to arrive in about 40 minutes. This means the enemy battalion is likely to arrive at the bridge

just before or just as the task force gets there. The enemy battalion has to be delayed. We used the two A-10s to delay the enemy battalion. These two aircraft should delay the enemy as well as inflict some damage. This delay provides the task force the time needed to deploy TM A, the most lethal company in the task force, to the far side of the objective. Any additional delay of the enemy battalion should provide enough time for the deployment of TM B to the far side. But if TM B does not have time to get to the far side, TM A has the combat power to defend against the enemy battalion.

The final threat is from the unknown enemy force approaching from the north out of the town of Dirkheim. Because the task force has lost communications with Scout #1 the enemy force's exact composition and actions are not known. We assumed some risk against this threat. It is likely TM C can handle this enemy threat. If the enemy force moves toward the bridge, then TM C will have to destroy it prior to securing the bridge. If the enemy force turns east towards PL RED, the other two task forces can eliminate it. TM C with two mechanized infantry platoons, a tank platoon, and a combat engineer platoon has the combat power and support to block the mobility corridor north of OBJ STEEL, clear the bridge, and overwatch the far side of the bridge.